

For Immediate Release

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Governor's Budget Includes Critical Funding for Drought Emergency, More to Do on Long-term Water Resilience and Affordability

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - Today, Governor Newsom released California's draft 2022-23 state budget, which includes \$750 million in drought emergency funding and key commitments to community climate resilience. As the current drought continues and future droughts loom, allocations for immediate drought relief are an important step in maintaining a sustainable water supply.

Investments in climate stability support the long-term health and water security of California's most vulnerable communities. We appreciate the steps the proposed budget takes toward furthering climate resilience in California's most vulnerable communities. As part of the commitment to climate adaptation and resilience, California must make a down payment on state funding for drinking water infrastructure investments and long-term drought and climate resiliency to take our communities out of the harmful and reactive cycle of drought.

One critical item left out of the January budget is short and long-term funding for water affordability. In particular, funding for water low-income rate assistance, like the program proposed in SB 222 (Dodd), is critically and urgently needed. As water rates continue to rise, low-income families are increasingly unable to afford their water bills. Funding to ensure that all Californians can afford drinking water, and state funding to ensure that undocumented residents can access the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), must be included in the final budget.

"We applaud Governor Newsom's inclusion of \$750 million for drought relief in the state's budget. Investing in proactive drought response is key to ensuring thousands of families don't lose running water in their homes," says Kyle Jones, Policy & Legal Director for Community Water Center. "However, if you can't afford your water, you may lose access to your water regardless. The legislature must pass SB 222 and create a low-income rate assistance program

in California to prevent water shutoffs in the face of increasing utility bills needed to adapt to droughts and climate change.”

“California’s landmark Human Right to Water law makes access to safe and affordable drinking water a human right for all Californians, regardless of immigration status,” says Nataly Escobedo Garcia, Water Policy Coordinator for Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability. “Unfortunately, the federal LIHWAP program, which provides assistance to families at imminent risk of water shutoff because of past due bills, excludes undocumented residents. State funding is needed to make all low-income families eligible.”

We also ask that continued investment in sustainable groundwater management, including technical assistance and outreach to communities, as well as set-asides for projects that benefit disadvantaged communities, be included in the final budget. We look forward to further discussion to target funding earmarked towards infrastructure towards projects that will prevent communities from losing access to water in the face of climate change. We call on the Governor and Legislature to include funding to make water systems more resilient to prevent the loss of water.

“We appreciate the investments committed to water infrastructure, and know that more is needed for long-term safe and sustainable water supplies for Los Angeles communities and across the state,” says Lauren Ahkiam, water policy director for the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy.

“The success of water affordability, drought resilience and groundwater management programs is directly linked to state capacity,” says Andria Ventura, policy director for Clean Water Action. “We must fund key positions at the State Water Board to ensure timely and effective regulation.”

The budget is a reflection of our values. We look forward to working with the Legislature and Governor in the months ahead to fully realize the Human Right to Water for all Californians and equitably address the pandemic and drought through concrete fiscal and policy proposals.

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Community Water Center (CWC) works to ensure that all communities have reliable access to safe, clean, and affordable water. Founded in 2006, CWC is a not-for-profit environmental justice organization, whose mission is to act as a catalyst for community-driven water solutions through education, organizing, and advocacy. Web: www.communitywatercenter.org Twitter: [@CWaterC](https://twitter.com/CWaterC) Facebook: [@CommunityWaterCenter](https://www.facebook.com/CommunityWaterCenter)

Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability works alongside the most impacted communities to advocate for sound policy and eradicate injustice to secure equal access to opportunity regardless of wealth, race, income and place. We work with community leaders throughout the San Joaquin Valley and Eastern Coachella Valley on such issues as safe affordable drinking water, basic transit services, wastewater services, decent affordable housing, and the right to live free from industrial pollution with infrastructure that supports

healthy lifestyles. Through co-powerment, organizing, litigation, policy advocacy, and research, we confront California's stark inequalities manifest in too many of California's low income communities and communities of color. Twitter: LCJandA FB: @lcjacalifornia IG: @leadership_counsel Web: leadershipcounsel.org

Clean Water Action is a national nonprofit founded in 1972 to promote citizen engagement and action to protect our environment, health, economic well-being and community quality of life. Clean Water Action organizes strong grassroots groups, coalitions and campaigns to solve environmental and community problems. For more information, visit our website at www.cleanwater.org or follow us on Twitter @cleanh2oca.

Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) works to build a new economy rooted in good jobs, thriving communities, and a healthy environment through recharging democracy through grassroots organizing and community-oriented policy. For more information, visit our website at <https://laane.org> or follow us on Twitter @LAANE.